

THE ARMY VISION

Strategic Advantage in a Complex World





The Army of 2025 and Beyond will effectively employ lethal and non-lethal overmatch against any adversary to prevent, shape, and win conflicts and achieve national interests. It will leverage cross-cultural and regional experts to operate among populations, promote regional security, and be interoperable with the other Military Services, United States Government agencies and allied and partner nations. Leveraging the Total Force, it will consist of a balanced, versatile mix of scalable, expeditionary forces that can rapidly deploy to any place on the globe and conduct sustained operations within the full range of military operations. Composed of agile and innovative institutions, Soldiers, and Civilians, the United States Army of 2025 and Beyond provides strategic advantage for the Nation with trusted professionals who strengthen the enduring bonds between the Army and the people it serves.

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I. The Army in 2015

Today, our Army is a force simultaneously in transition, in action, and in preparation. As an Army in transition, we are returning and recovering from almost a decade and a half of sustained deployments in support of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We are supporting wounded warriors and veterans, retraining Soldiers, and recapitalizing equipment. At the same time, we are an Army in continuous action. We are supporting combat operations throughout the Middle East and Central Asia, enabling humanitarian assistance efforts by other U.S. government agencies in West Africa, responding to Russian aggression through collaborative military exercises with our European allies, assisting our partners around the world to develop professional and capable armies, defending critical networks against cyber attacks, supporting domestic civil authorities through disaster relief, and furthering our national objectives in the Pacific. Finally, we are an Army in preparation: developing leaders capable of operating in complex environments and training units and Soldiers to respond to emergent missions and future threats in anticipation of the inevitable moment when our civilian leadership will call upon us to respond to an unpredictable crisis.

Our storied history reaches back almost 240 years; through war and peace, all three components of our Army (Regular Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve) have protected the homeland, assured our allies, and, when necessary, fought our Nation's wars. Our Soldiers, and the dedicated civilians who support them, have served with distinction and honor and earned the title of *Trusted Professionals* in the unflinching service of our fellow countrymen and our democratic values. We are the strength of the Nation and the premier land force in the world. With forces stationed and deployed around the globe, we **prevent** conflict by deterring potential adversaries and assuring allies and partners, **shape** the strategic, operational and tactical environment to ensure the U.S. maintains an advantage prior to conflict, and can **win** quickly and decisively in the event of conflict.

Our Army also stands at an inflection point. Emerging from fourteen years of war, facing significant budgetary pressures, and confronted with an increasingly complex security environment, we must determine what kind of Army the Nation will need for the future. Our exclusive use of previous paradigms is insufficient for the task ahead; neither the overwhelming armor formations of the Cold War nor units focused on counter insurgency from our recent combat experience will be adequate. Instead, we must build on our long history of success, adaptation, and strong leadership to change and evolve.



The challenges and complexity of the future will require the Army to provide a broader range of capabilities in order to enable strategic outcomes across a complex and diverse panorama of global missions. The future will require an increasing number of operations within and among populations and an enhanced ability to consolidate and integrate contributions from government, military, and coalition partners. Guided by our professional ethos, our leaders and units will continue the Army's transformation into an agile, expert, innovative, interoperable, expeditionary, scalable, versatile, and balanced force that can provide additional strategic options for civilian and military leaders in future crises.

Our Vision for the Army of 2025 and Beyond will define the Army's mission and unique role among the military services, describe discrete changes in the future strategic environment that serve as a catalyst for change, and articulate key characteristics that leverage our present capabilities and will enhance the strategic advantage that the Army provides within the U.S. national security framework.

II. The Unique Roles of the Army

In support of our enduring mission to prevent, shape and win, we maintain comparative advantages within and throughout the Department of Defense due to our unique contributions. Although we rely on the work of Marines, Sailors, and Airmen for many of our assigned tasks, the Nation relies on us to provide the following unique capabilities upon which our entire system of defense depends.

CONSOLIDATE STRATEGIC GAINS. The Army is the Nation's means to seize and hold territory and consolidate gains. While other military services can impose devastating effects on an adversary, the Army is the only service that can fully enforce the Nation's will and decisively defeat an enemy on land. This capability is derived from the Army's ability to deliver and sustain an unmatched scale of land-based forces in a diverse number of theaters and compel a determined enemy to surrender or abandon its objectives, deter potential adversaries, and assure its allies and partners.

INTEGRATE OPERATIONS. The Army provides foundational capabilities to Combatant Commanders, including major headquarters capable of delegating to lower levels of command, and is an essential integrator of military, interagency, and multinational operations; Army commanders and staffs expertly synchronize all instruments of national power to affect and sustain strategic outcomes. This capability is the result of the Army's robust presence across continents, unmatched tactical mobility, span of functional expertise, and its decentralized exercise of authority, direction, and control at tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

ENABLE SUSTAINED OPERATIONS. Central to the Army's unique role among the military services is its ability to enable sustained operations. From civil engineering to port opening to inland logistical support, the Army delivers enduring foundational capacity to sustain United States military operations at home and abroad. The Army provides logistical support to entire theater and regional campaigns and, through its sheer size, can provide a range of capabilities to complement the operations of the other military services, U.S. government agencies, and allied forces. While all Department of Defense components are necessary to prevent, shape and win future conflicts, the Army's sustainment capabilities are essential to ensure the necessary capacity to maintain U.S. military efforts for a sufficient duration to accomplish the mission.



OPERATE AMONG POPULATIONS. The Army is also the Nation's premier force for persistent operations within and among populations in order to influence long-term outcomes. War, ultimately, is conducted on land with adversaries seeking to maintain control over, and often fighting in the midst of, larger civilian populations. As the primary military service for providing non-lethal ground capabilities - including military police, engineers, civil affairs, and medical officers trained to work with local governments and populations - the Army is best suited to execute protracted operations within, and to build enduring working relationships with, local populations. These relationships create unique and enduring bonds that build capacity, transparency, and trust. These outcomes cannot be achieved through short-duration excursions, intermittent military exercises, or off-shore training opportunities.

The Army has refined its ability to carry out these roles over many years, becoming the most capable and adaptive land force in the world. The uncertainty of the future security environment will not alter the Army's mission or the unique roles we provide to the Department of Defense. Specific trends, however, will alter the way in which we effectively meet the future demands that the Nation levies upon us.

III. Chaos and a Complex World

Over the next 10 years, it is likely the United States will face an unstable, unpredictable, increasingly complex global security environment that will be shaped by several key emergent trends: the rise of non-state actors; an increase in "hybrid threats;" state challenges to the international order; and expanding urbanization.

Challenges to the existing international order of nation-states are accelerating primarily due to the growing power and influence of non-state actors. Enabled by widespread access to the Internet, individuals are embracing a plethora of ethnic, religious, and familial identities separate and distinct from their national identities. This separate identification emboldens non-state groups and others operating within and beyond



traditional states. The broad diffusion of technology is also enabling non-state actors and individuals to acquire state-like capabilities, further challenging traditional state authorities. Exacerbated by inadequate governance and increasing resource competition, the rise of non-state actors is undermining governmental structures, weakening stable states and causing weak states to fail. These states become safe havens for terrorist and criminal groups and breeding grounds for potential pandemics, thereby threatening global and regional stability, including our existing, rules-based international system.

Due in part to the breakdown in traditional state authority, hybrid threats – state or non-state actors that employ dynamic combinations of conventional, irregular, terrorist, and criminal capabilities – will proliferate, elevating the importance of the human dimension of warfare. State actors will increasingly utilize proxy forces, criminal organizations, orchestrated civil unrest and non-governmental networks of computer hackers in concert with their traditional war fighting capabilities to create instability, while complicating an opponent's development and application of effective countermeasures. Non-state actors, including terrorist organizations, will continue to acquire sophisticated military equipment to enable them to conquer territory and fight smaller-scale military forces on an equal footing. Hybrid threats will also leverage social networks and all forms of media to distribute propaganda to the widest possible audience in order to weaken resistance and gain recruits. These threats present unique challenges by exploiting gaps in United States and allied capacity, doctrine and technology that nullify or greatly inhibit U.S. and allied response options.

At the grand strategic level, major regional powers, including a resurgent Russia and an increasingly assertive China, will continue to challenge international norms and the interests of the United States and its allies through violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their weaker neighbors. However, the impacts of globalization will change the way in which regional powers will choose to pursue their strategic ends. States that are inextricably intertwined with the international system will increasingly seek to avoid the devastating political and economic consequences attendant to an overt military strike. Instead, aggressive powers will apply all elements of national power (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) in creative

ways to achieve their objectives while simultaneously complicating U.S. policy choices and inhibiting a concerted international response. These complex campaigns across multiple domains of warfare are raising the probability of miscalculation and likelihood of conventional interstate war, in spite of existing nuclear deterrents.

By 2030, 60 percent of the world's population is expected to live in cities. Much of this urbanization is occurring in the developing world, including within weaker or weakening states. In some cases this urbanization is manifesting itself in the form of sprawling, ungoverned areas adjacent to cities. Rampant, poorly-planned urbanization poses a major challenge to weakly-governed states, becoming prime havens for terrorists, criminals and other threats seeking to create instability and challenge law and order. The extensive use of inadequately-controlled urban areas as an operational base and refuge by adversaries will both inhibit traditional U.S. technological advantages and increase the probability that U.S. forces will be required to conduct operations within these areas during future conflict.

Burgeoning middle classes and mass urbanization in populous countries like China and India will heighten pressures on already scarce resources. The rising demands of these populations for energy, food, and water may increase the potential for both intrastate and interstate conflict. Additionally, climate change and severe weather patterns will exacerbate resource competition and may compound already difficult conditions in developing countries. These trends will likely increase the need for U.S. forces to rapidly respond to humanitarian crises, regionally de-stabilizing population migrations, and epidemics.

The confluence of these trends over the next 10 years will fracture the linear and predictable relationships between and among states, non-state actors, and populations to which the United States has become accustomed. This breakdown in the international order will make predictable outcomes increasingly elusive, resulting in a more complex international system with non-linear, and potentially more dangerous, consequences.

The complexity and unpredictability of the security environment will pose significant challenges to how the U.S. military operates, requiring an Army that can respond more rapidly to crises and more skillfully transition between types of military operations. The conversion of urban environments into conflict zones will require enhancing our ability to employ non-lethal tools and operate among populations. Furthermore, the proliferation of sophisticated military technology will require the effective application of technology under rapidly changing circumstances in order to obtain true military superiority. Taken together, the changes in the future operating environment will require unique skills and capabilities along the entire range of military operations and challenge previous assumptions that Army forces trained for one set of military missions are adequately trained for all other missions within the range of military operations.

IV. The Army of 2025 and Beyond: Characteristics for a Complex World

The complexities and uncertainties of the future require the Army of 2025 and Beyond to remain the world's premier land force – an agile organization applying sustained expeditionary land power, and serving as the key integrator of U.S. and allied efforts in defense of the Nation and its interests. To achieve this goal, the Army of 2015 must evolve to meet the demands of the future security environment.

To achieve the Army of 2025 and Beyond, our future force will be organized around eight key characteristics that will enable success, regardless of the mission assigned



or the threat confronted. Distinct from the tenets of Army operations described in the recent Army Operating Concept, these characteristics highlight the essential qualities of ready Army forces, writ large, for the future. They capitalize on the Army's enduring mission and our unique roles among the military services; the resulting transformation will better enable us to operate in the complex world we envision for the future.

AGILE. First and foremost, the Army of 2025 must be an agile organization able to respond to unforeseen events and seamlessly transition across the range of military operations. Agility starts with Soldiers and leaders capable of continuous re-orientation and adaptation within increasingly unpredictable environments. While Army leaders have always dealt with rapidly-changing circumstances, the speed of change and uncertainty in the future will create an even greater demand for innovative, adaptive Soldiers and leaders who thrive amidst ambiguity.

As it applies to Soldiers, improving our agility begins with changing how we recruit, develop, manage, and train personnel. We will need a whole-of-Army recruitment and retention strategy and must commit to personnel policies that better develop and manage Soldiers and Army Civilians in order to optimize individual performance, best meet our manning requirements, and assure the health and welfare of our force. This includes offering broadening experiences with other military services, U.S. government agencies, and the private sector that are aligned with career progression. Increasing agility will also require further investments in military professional development and formal education, both within the Army and through partnerships with civilian academic institutions and private industry. We must also integrate enhanced technology into unit and individual training to provide experiences that better reflect the complex challenges Soldiers will face.

As it applies to organizations, improving the agility of non-operational headquarters and agencies will result in greater responsiveness to the needs of our Soldiers by reducing overhead, eliminating unnecessary demands on operational headquarters, and streamlining current institutional processes to proactively support innovation and modernization. The Army must also increase its responsiveness to Combatant Commanders, providing better access to Soldiers, units, and organizations with unique skills and creating training scenarios that adapt to evolving requirements across all theaters of operation

EXPERT. The Army of 2025's agility must be complemented by expertise in areas vital to its global mission. The challenges of the future require the Army to be a highly skilled organization, possessing a deep understanding of a broad range of military, regional, and civil topics. To succeed, we must develop and leverage the unique capabilities possessed by our Soldiers, civilians, and contractor workforce.

As it applies to Soldiers, increased expertise requires enhancing proficiency in their missions, war fighting skills, and application of technological tools. We must also improve and enhance the military judgment of junior leaders to make difficult, real-time decisions that account for both tactical and strategic contexts. Increased training related to interpersonal dynamics, organizational psychology, and negotiating to achieve desired outcomes with governments and indigenous populations will be essential. This also will require increased investment in language, cultural, and socially broadening experiences for our Soldiers.

As it applies to organizations, improving expertise will require increased mastery of political-military affairs and institutional strategy throughout our tactical and operational headquarters. Additionally, we must build on the success the Army has enjoyed with Regionally Aligned Forces and expand the expertise of whole units, not just individual Soldiers, which possess a mastery of regions, languages, countries, and cultures. Finally, we must better leverage the Army National Guard's and the Army Reserve's unique civilian-acquired skill sets and unit stability to augment the cross-cultural, civil-military, and regional expertise of our total force.

INNOVATIVE. The Army of 2025 must also be innovative, able to rapidly identify and grapple with complex problems and develop heuristics, or rules of thumb, to adapt and achieve results. Adapting will require innovative thinking, including developing new concepts and applications and optimizing our use of existing capabilities.

As it applies to technology and materiel solutions, increased innovation should drive the development of new tools and technologies, enabling the Army to obtain capabilities ahead of competitors and adversaries. This will require enhancing methods



to anticipate future demands on our forces and increased investments in research and development. The application of prudent judgment to either advance a program or delay it until the technology is truly mature will be critical as we begin to evaluate resource trade-offs between technological solutions and investments among the other eight key characteristics. Moreover, as asymmetric technologies are raising costs to the Army, we must also “bend the cost curve” toward potential enemies and develop new solutions to technological challenges. Finally, where appropriate, we will leverage commercial innovation, including alternatives to strictly military solutions, to ensure we benefit from the current capabilities available from the private sector.

As it applies to doctrine, training, and organizations, increased innovation will address the use of disruptive, asymmetric tools that are already decreasing the value of U.S. conventional weapons and equipment. These factors are limiting our ability to easily overpower adversaries. Necessary innovation will require increased decentralization to allow headquarters, units, and junior leaders to experiment with new ideas without fear of coming into conflict with orthodoxy. Soldiers at all levels must be empowered to think creatively and find solutions that rapidly exploit unforeseen opportunities. Finally, innovation, like agility, will necessitate streamlining processes and systems within the institutional Army to ensure we are moving in a unified manner toward new and creative ideas that support our mission and unique roles.

INTEROPERABLE. As the foundation upon which other U.S., allied and multinational capabilities will operate, the Army of 2025 must be interoperable by easily supporting and enabling joint, whole-of-government and multinational land-based operations. As the essential building block of these efforts, we must possess the ability to coordinate all elements of national power. This necessitates training that brings together agencies and organizations with which the Army will deploy and operate. Interoperability also requires technological compatibility. We must develop and advance a base technological architecture into which other military services, U.S government agencies, and allied partners can easily “plug and play.”



EXPEDITIONARY. The Army of 2025 must also possess expeditionary capabilities to rapidly deploy from the continental United States and sustain operations until strategic objectives are achieved. This requires Soldiers and leaders with both a base set of war fighting skills and an expeditionary mind-set, including the confidence, competence and critical-thinking skills to respond to unexpected situations under austere and complex conditions. As recent deployments have been heavily dependent on large forward operating bases, the Army must re-learn to prioritize rapid deployments to meet combatant commander demands, regardless of the environment. This necessitates changing fighting formations to support sustainable, expeditionary deployments, and creating organic sustainment capabilities that enable self-sufficiency, at all unit levels. Additionally, we must adapt combat systems to better support expeditionary operations, including through platforms with greater mobility and reduced logistical demands.

Enhanced country access and theater presence is also necessary to support the Army's expeditionary capability. Therefore, even as we re-establish a greater presence within the continental United States, we must maintain a rotational presence with pre-positioned military equipment to expedite readiness in the event of crisis abroad. These deployments, and their associated operations, shape regional theaters of operation, promote interoperability, and shorten response times in the event of crisis. We must capitalize on our success with Regionally Aligned Forces to further augment this capability. Finally, to expand its ability to rapidly place U.S. land forces anywhere in the world, the Army must develop tactics and procedures that incorporate the emergent presence of anti-access and area-denial threats.

SCALABLE. The Army of 2025 and Beyond must also be scalable, ready to rapidly adjust the size of its units and attendant capabilities, aggregating and disaggregating forces to quickly and efficiently respond to operational demands. While the Army has always "task-organized" for missions, such sub-optimization will not be enough to meet the demands of the future, especially as the Army becomes smaller and decreases its margin for error. We must increase modularity for units below the brigade level in order to improve our ability to meet demands with appropriately sized forces. Enhancing scalability also requires delegating increased authority and direction to more junior commanders and, when appropriate, assigning senior officers to command smaller units. This will be particularly true of units operating with allied and partner governments. Operational headquarters must be provided authorities and resources to nimbly task-organize and integrate forces under a single mission commander, allowing for the rapid creation of teams to respond to fluid and dynamic situations. Finally, as scalability will also involve merging multiple components, special and conventional forces and other capabilities that span multiple military services, we must develop and advance doctrine for the Department of Defense that establishes standard operating procedures for these niche command relationships.

VERSATILE. In order to operate successfully in a complex world, the Army of 2025 and Beyond must be versatile and possess a wide array of capabilities to operate effectively across the range of military operations. In contrast to agility, which is the ability to adapt to changing circumstances during operations and shift quickly between types of missions, versatility means inherently possessing a mix of organic capabilities to address the full range of potential threats and meet the mission requirements of our political and military leadership. This will become increasingly important as hybrid threats will necessitate creative solutions that cannot be found

in general purpose forces exclusively trained to perform a single mission. Instead, the Army will require a broad array of skill sets and unique capabilities suited to respond to multiple types of threats that future adversaries may pose. Essential to this versatility is the understanding that no particular type of warfare can be ignored or subordinated and most missions are not “lesser included” in relation to one another. Our success in the future will be directly correlated to our ability to develop unique doctrine, training, and materiel solutions to address the broad range of military operations. As the Army develops materiel solutions, it must ensure that new technologies acknowledge the expanded range of warfare that we will encounter without over, or under, prioritizing a particular mission set and avoiding niche capabilities that may not adequately address all future requirements. Finally, we must consider increased specialization for units that are preparing for an assigned mission.

BALANCE. The keystone of the Army of 2025 and Beyond is balance. Balance means, in part, ensuring the appropriate distribution of resources and capabilities across the Total Force – Regular Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve. Balance for the Total Force of 2025 requires a strategy that leverages and optimizes the full-time training of the Regular Army and the resident skill sets and unique unit stability of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve. Readiness processes and metrics should be optimized to ensure all Soldiers, leaders, and units are prepared for their assigned missions, including rapid deployments, on a reasonable schedule that balances time, notification, and demand.

Balance also refers to the Army’s ability to balance all eight key characteristics for the Army of 2025 and Beyond. Many of these characteristics are interrelated and may pose independent and seemingly conflicting demands on the Army. To meet our vision of the Army of 2025 and Beyond, they must be balanced and, when in conflict, appropriate consideration and prioritization should include deliberate discussions by our senior leadership of the attendant risks and trade-offs.

When combined, these characteristics provide a clear vision for the form and function of the Army of 2025 and Beyond and a concise framework for defining future strategic goals.

The Army of 2025 and Beyond will effectively employ **lethal and non-lethal over-match** against any adversary to prevent, shape, and win conflicts and achieve national interests. It will leverage **cross-cultural and regional experts** to operate among populations, promote regional security, and be **interoperable** with the other Military Services, United States Government agencies and allied and partner nations. Leveraging the Total Force, it will consist of a **balanced, versatile mix of scalable, expeditionary forces** that can rapidly deploy to any place on the globe and conduct sustained operations within the full range of military operations. Composed of **agile and innovative institutions, Soldiers, and Civilians**, the United States Army of 2025 and Beyond provides strategic advantage for the Nation with trusted professionals who strengthen the enduring bonds between the Army and the people it serves.



V. Building a New Future on a Proud Past

Moving towards this vision of the future will not be easy. Determining prioritization amongst competing requirements is the challenge of every resource-constrained organization. The inherent risk that accompanies all change will be particularly poignant for us, as we will receive no reprieve from the demand signal for ready Army forces. The security environment will not stand still as we adjust and evolve; as we maintain our ability to win high intensity conflicts, a portion of the force must start to train and focus on other missions within the full range of military operations. Importantly, current budget austerity may result in temporary delays in responding to crisis as units re-orient to address a variety of emerging threats. Greater expertise and concomitant specialization may also mean that Soldiers and leaders, even within the same occupational specialty, will not receive the same developmental assignments; personnel and human resources guidance will have to keep pace with change to ensure that promising careers are not adversely impacted. Every choice we make to transform the Army of 2015 into the Army of 2025 and Beyond will entail some degree of risk; however, the risk of not changing at all is far greater. As we transition to our shared future, we will do so clear-eyed and ready for the road ahead. Change will be difficult, but it is a challenge worthy of our efforts.

Even as we evolve, we must remember why we are great and what must endure. The Army is a highly professional, highly ethical, high quality force. This we will maintain. We will retain the quality and priority of our shared values and ethics; we will preserve the earned trust and confidence of the American people; and we will enforce a professional environment across our Army that promotes and respects the individual dignity of all Soldiers and civilians, allowing them to realize their full potential as part of a tremendous team. As we integrate these eight key characteristics to transform, we will remember the foundation of our Army's strength by daily living the Values of our profession and exhibiting the character, competence, and commitment that are the hallmarks of our professional Army.



Before the Declaration of Independence was signed, there was a United States Army. The Army of 2015 is a force to be proud of - a force built upon the hard choices and dedicated work of generations of great Soldiers before us - but, we cannot become the Army we need to be by remaining the Army that we are. In order for the Army to achieve its enduring mission for the Nation, it must adapt and evolve as the world around us changes. Our work begins now; the imperative to change warrants the full commitment of the Total Army. Success is only possible if this journey is made together.

This document entails only the first of two parts to revitalize the Army's strategic planning process. We will further define our strategic goals and the discrete implications of the Army Vision in the Army Strategic Plan. The Army Vision will be the lodestar for developing the Army's annual budget and making adjustments to Army doctrine, organization, training, materiel, logistics, personnel, facilities and policy in the years ahead. If we are committed, we will succeed in transforming to meet future security challenges and maintaining the Nation's strategic advantage in a complex world. By achieving our Vision, we ensure the Nation receives the Army it needs to endure another 240 years...and beyond.

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